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Rebel with a Clause**Rebel with a Clause****A writer's lament**

By ALEX G. TSAKUMIS

Email | Print | Write | Size: A A A

Share: Help

I am often asked why I write for this paper. Recently, while offering remarks to a group in downtown Vancouver, a young journalism student asked me the most extraordinary question.

"I don't always agree with everything you have to say, but I respect your experiences. Passing them on is a real gift to us. I just wanted to say 'Thanks' and ask if you think old-school writing, like yours, is gone? You're always so outraged when the public doesn't get the truth. Why do you write for 24 hours?"

Apart from the generous compliment, which I appreciated, I write for this paper, I told her, because I've never worked with a finer group of people.

This newsroom is chalk-full of exceptional reporters and our editor and publisher have to be the most willing to listen.

We're a team, not a bunch of independents.

Getting the story straight and true is priority one.

And while I may sniff and snivel at the fact that the likes of Lindsay Lohan and Pamela Anderson have, too often for my liking, appeared in our pages, we also have the distinction of providing the best coverage on the Olympics thanks to my colleague Bob Mackin.

Of course, my fellow columnist Bill Tieleman, who writes in this space on Tuesdays, is the one and only journalist to have so completely and competently covered the raid on the B.C. Legislature and accompanying corruption trial known as 'Basi-Virk', that I think the Webster Foundation should have an award just for him.

After I answered the young student's question, however, I started thinking about what you have read in this column so many times as being so utterly important: Your right to know.

Somehow, we have generally allowed for the erosion of good broadcast and print journalism, that in the headlong spiral into hell we have literally forsaken our rights.

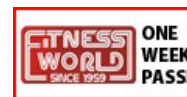
The accompanying assault on those rights by government, business and even by the media itself, has left us, often enough, barren and despondent.

In America, through the ongoing, despicable assault on brave Israel, St. Barry's administration recently sent a senior White House advisor to speak at a conference where, among scholarly offerings, a well-known Holocaust denier was to "prove" his theory.

For sixty years, we know such theories are the ravings of loons, but we allow them to spew their venom under the thin guise of freedom of speech.

But did you read or hear about this in the mainstream press?

On the path to sustainability

**Poll**

Are you concerned free speech will be a casualty during the Olympic Games?

Yes

No

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Of course not.

They're too busy shining Obama's shoes.

Mind you are we any closer to upholding the truth here at home?

Think of this: Just in the last three years, since our Olympic efforts have ramped up, we are being subjected to the indignities of even discussing "free speech zones".

The government's paranoia, so deeply embedded, has produced a whole series of affronts that instead of widespread outrage, we have become fat in our complacency.

Another day, another attack on your right to know; the truth; freedom, and not just of the press.

In a recent letter obtained by this writer, Rob Holmes, president of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, raises some excellent points with the 2010 Integrated Security Unit about the constitutionality of restrictions to free expression and speech.

But should this be necessary? Have we become Mozambique? Iran or China? Cuba, or Venezuela even?

Then again, whom am I kidding?

We live in a province where a sitting premier, so drunken on his own arrogance, will not leap to find out where went thousands of e-mails related to the biggest scandal in B.C. history.

Even the City of Vancouver is too busy butt-kissing VANOC to realize what it may be giving up in the process as the publisher of this paper fights for a free press throughout the Olympics.

It's sad, frankly, that you are no longer guaranteed a right to know.

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